

Russell Creighton-Weldon. Private Creighton-Weldon of Palm Bay, Florida, was killed this past weekend while serving in Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was one of the soldiers killed by the suicide bomber driving the taxi.

Private Creighton-Weldon was in Company A, the 27th Infantry, Third Division, out of Fort Stewart, Georgia. My prayers and condolences are with Michael's family during this hour of loss. My family and my staff grieve with them in honor of Michael.

President Lincoln was once quoted saying that we as a nation "should have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty." Michael dared to do his duty, and in so doing, he gave the ultimate sacrifice for our continued freedom. We owe him a debt of gratitude that we can never repay.

□ 1630

This morning, I had the honor of speaking to Michael's mother, retired U.S. Army Sergeant Major Jean Weldon. She said that Michael, or Big Mike as his family affectionately called him, was a hero to his family and now he is a hero for America.

Mrs. Weldon also had great praise for the Palm Bay Police Department and the mayor for the support that they have provided her during this time of grieving. Specifically, they have had to deploy officers to her house to keep the press away from her and her family who have been very grieved by the constant approaches of the press. And I think America's press should be aware of this that one grieving mom would like some space and that they should be sensitive to this all across the Nation because I am sure her experience is not unique.

While sadness comes with the loss of each soldier, we can have faith in our military commanders and in our Commander in Chief. Coalition forces continue to make good progress towards our objective of ending the Iraqi regime, freeing the Iraqi people, and disarming the country of weapons of mass destruction. It was in this cause that Michael gave his life, and it is a worthy cause.

Secretary Rumsfeld said this past weekend that there are difficult days ahead. We know this in Palm Bay, as we are experiencing it firsthand. To the extent that the Republican Guard poses difficulties, which we expect them to, there will be dangerous days ahead. Mr. Rumsfeld went on to say, Baghdad may not be easy, but the outcome is certain and at some point the Iraqi people will end up fearing Saddam Hussein and his regime less and they will end up anticipating liberation and freedom more; and it will end and it will end successfully.

The true nature of the Iraqi regime is being revealed by what we see. Brutal treatment of POWs; use of human shields to protect military assets from attack; the torching of oil fields which

are the future of the Iraqi people; false reports about coalition attacks on civilians, mosques and cultural centers; lies about Iraqi adherence to Geneva Conventions which they have blatantly violated; Feyadeen infiltration of regular Iraqi forces to prevent surrender and defection; using false acts of surrender in flagrant violation of the laws of war, and using them to attack coalition forces; and, yes, the use of suicide bombers, one of whom took the life of a great American, Michael Russell Creighton-Weldon.

We all in the 15th congressional district and in our Nation salute Michael for the service he provided our Nation and the sacrifice he made. We join with his mother, his father, his entire extended family in extending our condolences, and our prayers are with them and our Nation and our troops in the field as we continue in this cause.

CHURCH PENSION PLAN FAIRNESS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that amends our Nation's security laws in order to end discrimination against church pension programs.

One thing most Americans understand is the importance of saving money to ensure financial security after they retire. Just as important, they understand that investing in an employer-sponsored pension plan is a great way to help achieve this goal. America's clergy are no less interested in their retirement. In fact, for thousands of dedicated men and women of our clergy, pension plans are just as important, if not more so, as they are to members of the laity.

Yet for far too long, Congress has unintentionally failed to update church pension laws making it more difficult for clergy and other church employees to maximize their retirement savings.

Madam Speaker, one arcane, yet important, provision of our security laws allows corporate and other secular pension plans to band together into what are called collective trusts. These trusts allow pension plans to pool their assets for investment purposes in various stock and nonstock interests. For example, some collective trusts invest in real estate or private investment opportunities. They represent a way for pension plans to diversify their investments and to share the risks and transaction costs with other pension plans.

Collective trusts are not the problem. The problem is current law prohibits the Christian Brothers Church in Romeoville, Illinois, along with thousands of other church pension plans across the country, from participating in collective trusts. As a result, church pension plans cannot pool their assets and reap the benefits of collecting buy-

ing power. My bill is intended to correct this inequity.

There are three other points that are important for me to make: first, the SEC requires that collective trusts have sole management and control over the assets that are invested; second, nothing in this legislation is intended to alter the traditional SEC interpretation that the financial institution is responsible for exercising hands-on control over the collective trust; and, third, this measure does not in any way effect Tax Code provisions governing the treatment of pension plans, including the requirement that a church plan must be maintained by a church or eligible church-affiliated organization.

My bill allows church plan assets to be included in collective trust funds that also include assets of private employee and governmental plans.

Madam Speaker, there is no sound policy reason for our security laws to exclude church plan participation in specifically tailored pension plan investments. The Church Pension Plan Fairness Act is a reasonable, measured, and fair response to many of the concerns raised by clergy and other church employees around the country.

I want to thank my distinguished colleague and friend from Tennessee (Mr. FORD) for his strong support in cosponsorship of this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this bill. Our clergy deserves no less than the millions of other working men and women of America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time allocated to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

FIGHT FOR OUR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, in Iraq our Nation is creating 300,000 new war veterans. As these future veterans are fulfilling their duty to America in time of war, we must commit to fulfill our responsibilities to them in times of peace. But instead, the Bush administration recently saved \$388 million by